

Meet CAL FIRE's New Chiefs...

Becky Robertson, Assistant Region Chief, Southern Region

By Mallory Fites, Student Assistant, Communications

On Jan. 1, 2008 Rebecca (Becky) L. Robertson was appointed to be the assistant region chief for the Southern Region by Director Ruben Grijalva.

Robertson finds that each day presents different challenges, issues and opportunities.

"I like to tinker with the CAL FIRE "stuff" to try to make it better, run smoother, take less time, have less impact on folks, produce bigger dividends. When my tinkering is successful, then I feel good."

Robertson started her career with CAL FIRE in 1984 working in the Fresno Region Office. While at Fresno-Kings, she also worked as the Eastern and Western Operations division chief and as the deputy chief.

In 2001, Becky was promoted to the staff chief of Management Services for the Southern Region. While working as the Region's staff chief, she performed a special assignment in Sacramento as the chief

of Labor Relations and Human Resources. In 2006, she served as the interim Fresno-Kings unit chief until the current unit chief was assigned; this was the hardest job Robertson had during her career.

"Through a whole team and an entire unit effort we were able to stabilize the unit and the Schedule A contract. We were also able to set the unit up to move forward. In the end, it may be the best thing I have ever done for the department."

The hardest part about her job is finding enough time to accomplish everything.

When she has time, Robertson enjoys spending time working in her garden, hiking, creating pottery, painting, knitting, and baking. She also enjoys making candy and collecting rocks.

"CAL FIRE has a number of large challenges facing the department over the next few years," Robertson continued, "How we react as a team to the big chal-



lenges and how we address the smaller challenges will determine what the department looks like in the end".

"One of the strongest components of CAL FIRE has always been its employees. I know there are thousands of excellent folks already making a difference for the department's future."

Kevin Olson, Department Training Chief, Sacramento Headquarters

By Mary Beth Kihlthau, Student Assistant, Fire Protection, Sacramento Headquarters

In July 2007, Chief Kevin Olson was promoted to department training chief of CAL FIRE. Chief Olson began his career with CAL FIRE in 1980 with the Fresno-Kings Unit as a firefighter I. Over the past twenty-seven years, Chief Olson has worked in Tulare, San Bernardino, Riverside and San Luis Obispo. He came to Sacramento Headquarters, where he oversaw the Fire Protection Automation programs.

Chief Olson remembers the years as a fire captain at the Oak Glen Camp as one of the highlights of his career with CAL FIRE. He says that the camaraderie and friendships made there will stay with him for a lifetime. Chief Olson said the change of CDF to the CAL FIRE mission shows how the department is evolving and mov-

ing forward. Chief Olson said, "The ever evolving CAL FIRE mission shows that the department is moving forward, growing and is on a constant path for improvement." He recognizes that developing and keeping training current is a challenge but that it's a vital part to the success of CAL FIRE.

Throughout his career, Chief Olson has been involved in various cadres and committees. He is very involved at the Holy Cross Church and School in West Sacramento as the chairperson of the finance and facility committees. He currently lives in the Sacramento area with his wife, son, identical twin daughters and cat, Pickles.



Ralph Minnich, Unit Chief, Humboldt-Del Norte Unit

By Yvonne DiLeo, Office Assistant, Humboldt-Del Norte Unit

The Humboldt-Del Norte Unit of CAL FIRE welcomed Ralph H. Minnich on July 1, 2007, as their unit chief.

Chief Minnich, who has over 30 years of experience, began his career with CAL FIRE in the Butte Unit. His past positions include Northern Region deputy chief, Northern Operations Center assistant chief, Shasta-Trinity Unit battalion chief and Shasta-Trinity Unit forester I.

In 1976, Minnich graduated from the University of Washington with a Bachelor of Science degree in Forest Resources. He is a Registered Professional Forester, Advanced Peace Officer, possesses a Limited Service Teaching Credential with California Community Colleges and is a member of the Society of American Foresters and the Shasta County Peace Officers Association.

Chief Minnich has extensive training as an incident commander, operations sec-

tion chief, situation unit leader (Instructor), and has received numerous awards including CAL FIRE's Sustained Superior Accomplishment, Supervisory Superior Performance and Employee of the Year for the Shasta-Trinity Unit.

Minnich's diverse experiences and respected reputation will help to promote his goals of fostering healthy, productive relationships within the Unit and with local cooperative agencies that are responsible for the protection of natural resources.

The unit's lands extends from the Oregon border, 180 miles south to the Mendocino County line. The Unit includes portions of watersheds in the Smith, Klamath, Mad, Trinity, Van Duzen, Mattole and Eel Rivers. The Unit's Resource Management program is responsible for reviewing 300 to 350 Timber Harvest Plans annually.



Minnich and his wife Sunny have three grown daughters. The oldest, Jennifer, lives in Seattle while their twin daughters; Megan lives in Sacramento and Lindsey lives in San Diego.

Bernie Paul, Unit Chief, Siskiyou Unit

By Ron Bravo, Fire Prevention Battalion Chief, Siskiyou Unit

On Sept 17, 2007, Bernie Paul was appointed unit chief of the Siskiyou Unit and on Oct. 16 as Siskiyou County fire warden by the Board of Supervisors. Chief Paul's career started with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) in 1974 as a firefighter I in the Butte Unit. In 1977 and 1978 he was a firefighter II in the Fresno-King Unit.

Paul brings to his new position years of experience as he worked in the private sector as the owner and operator of a logging company in Nevada County from 1979 through 1984.

Chief Paul obtained permanent status at CAL FIRE in 1986 as a heavy fire equipment operator (HFEO) in the Nevada-Yuba-Placer Unit before taking a training and development assignment as a fire captain in 1990. In 1994, he transferred to the Siskiyou Unit.

Chief Paul later served as a fire captain specialist and then promoted to battalion chief of Fire Prevention in 1997. In 2001, he was promoted to assistant chief of Fire Prevention for the Northern Region. With Paul's interest in training, he has been assigned to the Leadership II Cadre for over ten years, Agency Rep Class, the National CIMC Cadre and the Steering Committee. He was instrumental in re-writing the Railroad Fire Prevention Guide and the 9400 Handbook.

In 2004, he was assigned as the assistant chief of operations in the Siskiyou Unit and Siskiyou County deputy fire warden. Chief Paul has also served on CAL FIRE's Incident Command Teams as an information officer, deputy incident command and as incident commander. "I have truly enjoyed being part of the Team," Paul said.



Paul and his wife LeeAnn live in Yreka with their son Jarrett, who is still in high school. His older son, Ryan, is attending college in Spokane, Washington.